DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 182 686 CS 005 234

AUTHOR Duquette, Raymond J.
TITLE Toward Life-Long Reading.
PUB DATE Jan 80
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Claremont Reading Conference (47th, Claremont, CA, January 18-19, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; *Curriculum Enrichment; Elementary Education; Elementary School Curriculum; *Reading Habits; *Reading Interests; Reading Skills

ABSTRACT

Developing life-long reading habits is a process that should begin in elementary school. Children should be encouraged not only to read what has been approved for classroom use but also to look beyond classroom walls to read for interest and enjoyment. "Looking beyond the walls" is a parable that suggests that school curriculum go beyond the guidelines of a district and not be limited by the books approved for classroom use. Rereading favorite poems, essays, or books for new insights and listening to someone read aloud for enjoyment should be encouraged. (A discussion of titles from among the author's favorites is included.) (AEA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Raymond J. Duquette
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED182686

Toward Life-Long Reading

Raymond J. Duquette
California State College, Bakersfield

Once upon a time, Miss Peabody, a teacher from Boston, decided to visit England, the land of her forefathers. From Piccadilly Circus, to Birmingham and Stratford-Upon-Avon she delighted in the people and the customs of the land. How "different" they were even though they looked like the folks back home and even spoke the same language, at least some of the time.

Upon her return to school that fall, she delighted in telling her students about England, its people, and its customs. She should have taught Plimouth Plantation, but the transgression was overlooked because, after all, it was her first trip abroad and she was still excited about her experiences.

The joys of this first adventure encouraged her to travel to Germany, Austria, Lichtenstein and Italy the following summer. While traveling she wondered whether knowledge of German would enable her to talk with other people in the Conditories and Gasthauses. Perhaps she could even order food that she liked rather than selecting the fourth item today and the fifth item tomorrow. Still, in Italy it was easy to order spaghetti without knowing Italian, and it was always good. But why, she wondered, did they bring her meat and cheese when all she had ordered was spaghetti? Strange Italians!

Returning to her classroom in the fall, she found her fourth graders once again delighted to hear of her travels. How clever they thought their teacher was - ordering by the number since she could read them and

CS005234

not the rest of the menu. They begged Miss Peabody to invite Elke's grandmother to visit them at school. She was from Germany and she could read German too. She'd be able to tell them about the things in the German menu which was now displayed on the classroom bulletin board.

The success of Elke's grandmother's visit encouraged a boy in the class to invite his mother to school. Guiseppi, who was known as Joe at school, informed the class that his mother would be happy to cook an Italian meal just like Miss Peabody had in Italy. And she would explain things to them too as Elke's grandmother had.

Now it was the custom in that part of the land to teach only those things approved by the state and district curriculum committees and it was an unpardonable sin to teach something which was the responsibility of others.

Oh, but what an exciting year it was for the students in Miss Peabody's fourth grade class. However, there was some concern for her covering material that was definitely part of another teacher's curriculum, namely, the sixth grade teacher. Although upsetting to her, this did not stop her from planning another trip abroad the following summer. For Miss Peabody, the teacher from Boston, was now a person of the world.

She planned a trip to the Middle East which would include the Holy Land, Greece and Egypt. She found the people there to be much more interesting than she had thought possible although they, too, were somewhat strange. Why didn't they speak English? And their food was something that she had never experienced before. And why couldn't they use the American alphabet in their writing? She might have made out some of the words for she was now a person of the world. In her mind she thought all of this to be "exciting" now rather than "different."

Upon her return, she was reminded to stick to the approved curriculum as detailed in the district guides. On the other hand there were students who had heard of the exciting things in Miss Peabody's room and were looking forward to the year in her fourth grade class. They wanted to hear about her travels and then invite people to visit their classroom.

One boy, named George, was looking forward to his mom's visit. She would bring dolmas and pilaf to class. They were his grandfather's favorite food and George was proud of the old man and his heritage. Perhaps he would come and tell them stories of his youth in Greece.

Now Miss Peabody was not one to hurt the feelings of the youngsters in her charge. Nor was she going to squelch George and the other children in her fourth grade class. So she decided to have a bulletin board telling of the places visited during the summer by members of the class and that of course included the teacher.

So the students in Miss Peabody's fourth grade class, although longing for dolmas and pilaf and hearing tales from George's grandfather of the old days in a far off land, studied Chief Massasoit instead and looked at picture postcards and menus on a bulletin board.

Looking Beyond the Walls - A Parable

Looking beyond the walls suggests that school curriculum go beyond the guidelines of a district. The curriculum must not be limited by the books approved for classroom use. Nor must other classroom materials be limited to those recommended for a particular group of children. Making readers of children implies that children not only read more than what has been approved for use in their classrooms, but also that they elect to do so. In a sense, children look beyond their classroom walls to read for interest, for enjoyment, or for school assignments.

When children look elsewhere for books to read, they are involved in a very important experience that is similar to that of an adult searching for books in libraries or good titles from other adults in conversation or from reviews of published materials. Toward life-long reading is a process that can begin in school, or should begin in school if it hasn't been developed elsewhere, particularly the home.

Recycling Good Books and Authors

An adult reader oftentimes rereads a favorite poem, essay, book, or any other written material that is of particular interest. Some adults even recycle themselves through the same titles year after year for enjoyment or perhaps for a new insight.

Of particular interest to me are the books of Hermann Hesse. They reflect love, hate, greed, social pressures and all the other experiences that are part of being human.

Who has not experienced the tranquility of Siddhartha? Adults have often related their lack of concern for the questionable morals of the woman who played such an important role in Siddhartha's life. They made no value judgement about her, save for her friendship with Siddhartha and her role in helping him find meaning in life. The tranquility one experiences while traveling with Siddhartha makes the book easily one that is read and reread.

Who has not experienced a friendship like that of Narcissus and Goldmund? The novel isn't just about good versus bad. It includes those characteristics that are associated with being human: love, understanding, patience, piety, acceptance, searching, etc.. Somehow,

rereading hesse, recycling for me for it is done regularly every few years, I find new insights about life and people. Of course Hesse is pleasant reading. He is easy to read anywhere but best alone in a relaxed situation.

But Hesse books didn't only speak of friendship, they also questioned social values of his day. Of particular interest to us is his treatise of the pressures exerted on children in schools. In Beneath the Wheel he related the exalted role of the top student of a graduating class. This youngster, a boy somewhere in the Alps at the turn of the Century, was respected by all in his village, respected solely for his status as the top student of his class. The pastor tutored him in religion, math, and science. The burgemeister discussed politics with him. The cobbler would take time to discuss problems of the world as he would do with other men of the village. Chores were out of the question for the honor student. He was either studying for his university entrance exams or resting and meditating.

The lad passed the exam and was accepted for the fall term. The summer was spent in discussions with the village elders and with fishing respites at his favorite hole. That fall he was sent off to the university with the blessings of all the villagers.

Soon after arriving at the university he realized that he wasn't the only honor student of a village school. He was not only aware of the brightness of his new classmates, he also found some surpassing him in honors. No longer was he the first student, nor the second, now he found himself fifth. Others became number fifteen, twenty and, of course, one was last.

Hesse wrote of the failure syndrome of the students of his time. Although all were once first, now only one could be. The dishonor felt

by some led them to drop out of school and occasionally to commit suicide. He referred to students being crushed "beneath the wheel." Are we still crushing students "beneath the wheel?"

Children learn to read by reading as well as being read to. As I look back on my youth, I find that I became a reader because I was read to and, of course, because many good books were available.

Having someone read to them is an experience that most people enjoy. During the past few years I have read to many people around the country. In every instance there were comments on the pleasure of listening to someone read aloud. Graduate students in my classes, and audiences all over, have sat in silence while being read to.

When students are encouraged to go beyond the walls of the classroom to select exciting trade books, they have something besides school grades to be happy about. Hopefully they will find stories and characters exciting enough to be intrinsically motivating for them to read and reread. They no longer look at grades only as success in school for their success now includes the world of literature. They are well on the road of life-long literacy.

Bibliography

Eileen Dunlop

Elizabeth

Frances Hodgson Burnett

The Secret Garden

Adrienne Jones

So Nothing is Forever

Another Place Another Spring

Julia Cunningham

Burnish Me Bright

Far in the Day

Clyde Bulla

The Sword in the Tree

Indian Hill

Stories of Favorite Operas

Wilson Rawls

Where the Red Fern Grows

Summer of the Monkeys

Marge Blaine

Dvora's Journey